Through the courtesy of the Director of the Queen Victoria Museum, Salisbury, I borrowed two normal adult specimens of the Black-eyed Bulbul to assist in formulating the following description. The yellow under tail-coverts retain their usual shade. The bill, legs, claws and eye wattles are pale horn instead of blackish. The remiges and rectrices are very pale buffish-white including the shafts and this also applies to the upper wing-coverts. The formalin makes it impossible to open the wings to examine the under coverts. The contour feathers are white with dull brown bases whereas a greyer shade occurs in normal birds. The heads differ: one has dull brown feathers mottled with pale yellow on the frons and crown, no yellow on the throat and the rictal bristles varying from pale gold through horn to brown, each being one or more colours apparently haphazardly. The other head has a pale brown crown with some dark brown feathers in the frons, the rictal bristles are even more variable with one nearly black and there is a slight yellowish wash on the throat extending on to the sides of the neck. The legs of this second bird are a shade darker than those of its sibling.

I conclude that two groups of genes control the dark colour of *Pycnonotus barbatus* and that in these two specimens, the major one is non-operative. Hence the generally white appearance of the feathers. The minor group which is operative affects the bases of contour feathers, the frons and crown, the rictal bristles and perhaps the bare parts. The yellowish wash on the throat of one specimen suggests that the genus *Pycnonotus* particularly in the enlarged sense used by Rand (*Fieldiana Zoology* 35 : 6 Notes on African bulbuls) is an attempt, a very successful attempt, by a forest family to invade the savannas. During the course of this expansion yellow pigments have become scarcer in the plumage thus producing the dark brownish bulbuls out of green forest birds. That this is a comparatively recent development is suggested by the taxonomic problems of the *P. barbatus*, *nigricans*, *capensis* complex.

First male of *Ploceus ocularis tenuirostris*

by M. A. Traylor

Received 3rd March, 1965

Ploceus ocularis tenuirostris Traylor (1964, *B.B.O.C.*, 84: 83) was originally described on the basis of three females from Ngamiland, and the only other known specimen was a female from Kabulabula in the Transvaal Museum. Now, through the generosity of M. P. Stuart Irwin and the National Museum of Bulawayo, I have a male specimen of *tenuirostris*, collected at Mambova, about 50 miles west of Livingstone on the Zambesi River, on 20th February 1964 by C. W. Benson.

The male has the slender bill characteristic of *tenuirostris*, although the difference between this specimen and the most slender-billed males of *crocatus* is not so marked as in the females. Comparative measurements of males are:

	Bill length	*Bill width*
crocatus (25)	18–21 (19.6)	6.8–8.3 (7.4)
tenuirostris (1)	20	6.7 mm.

In colour the single male of *tenuirostris* does not differ in any way from the long series of *crocatus*. Although it is always chancy to generalize from one specimen, it appears that the characters of *tenuirostris* are more accentuated in females than in males.

The occurrence of *P. o. tenuirostris* at Mambova is an extension of range across the eastern tip of the Caprivi Strip from Kabulabula, on the south bank of the Chobe River.

The River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (Wolf) in Barotseland, south-western Zambia

by C. W. Benson and M. P. Stuart Irwin

Received 26th April, 1965

Despite a fairly extensive western palaearctic breeding range, records of the River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* in its winter quarters remain exceptionally few. Indeed it cannot be stated with any certainty where the bulk of the population does winter. There are certainly fewer records than for the Olive-Tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum*, with a much more restricted breeding range; compare the respective distribution maps in Voous (1960).

Long & Benson (1960) give a single record from Nyasaland (now Malawi) and mention very briefly its status as given in the literature for southern and eastern Africa. It is of interest that one of us (Irwin) on 26th March, 1965 collected a River Warbler near Imusho (17° 35′ S., 23° 24′ E.), in extreme south-western Barotseland, near the border with Angola and the Caprivi Strip. It is an adult male in very fresh dress, wing 74, tail 55 mm. It weighed 19 grammes, and carried a considerable amount of body fat. The bird was collected low down in a dense thicket alongside a track through mixed *Acacia giraffae/Baikiaea plurijuga* woodland on Kalahari Sand, about half-a-mile from the Mashi (Kwando) River. No further individuals were recorded, though a Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* was collected the same morning in similar habitat. Unless they were singing the two species would be difficult to tell apart in the field.

The only previous Zambian specimen was collected in reeds fringing the Zambezi 30 miles upstream from Zumbo, which is on the border with Mozambique, 25th December (Alexander, 1900). Tree (1963) reports seeing one at close range on an island of reeds floating down the Zambezi at Feira (the station on the north bank of the Zambezi, opposite Zumbo), 6th April. From the habitat it was unlikely to have been a Thrush Nightingale.

References:

Alexander, B. 1900. An ornithological expedition to the Zambesi River (second part). *Ibis*, 42: 70–109.

Long, R. C. and Benson, C. W. 1960. The River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (Wolf) in Nyasaland. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.*, 80: 52.

Tree, A. J. 1963. Two unusual palaearctic passerines in Northern Rhodesia. *Ostrich*, 34: 178.

Voous, K. H. 1960. *Atlas of European birds*. London: Nelson & Sons.